Bacchiarius

(4th – 5th Centuries)

BRIEFING

Bacchiarius was an itinerant monk, probably of Galician origin, who lived in the late 4th and early 5th centuries and probably died in 425. Some sources consider him to have been from Ireland and a disciple of Saint Patrick. He is credited as being the first monk with a known name in the history of Western Christianity . He is, along with the Galician nun Egeria, one of the first traveling monks to establish contacts between the West, Africa, and the Middle East.

BIOGRAPHY

He was accused of being a Priscillianist , and thus had to go into exile despite several letters to Pope Innocent I in which he professed his orthodoxy (Libellus de fide). According to the most widely accepted version, several bishops of Baetica accused this monk of following the doctrine of Priscillian, so he went to Rome to defend himself before the Pope. He then wrote his Libellus de fide, a scholarly work in which he makes somewhat excessive use of allegory and expounds his ideas on God, the Holy Trinity, man, the devil, and the canon of Scripture. Thanks to this work, he was acquitted, even though he demonstrates sympathy for Ophidianism and astrology in it, and there is no explicit condemnation of Priscillianism. The author condemns Helvidius, but never mentions Origen or Priscillian, although he holds positions close to these authors. He then returned to Spain and eight years later had to flee again, this time as a result of the Vandal invasion.

Most of the scant direct information about Bacchiar comes from the work *De Viris Illustribus *, by the Marseillais priest Gennadius , from the late 5th century , which contains about a hundred short biographies in the style of St. Jerome 's book of the same title (in fact, it purports to be a continuation of it). Some sources identify Bacchiar with the little-known Bishop Peregrinus, author of the prologue to the * Canones in Pauli apostoli epistolas *, preceding the letters of St. Paul whose authorship is attributed to Priscillian. This identification is based on the phrase with which he begins his profession of faith: "Peregrinus ego sum...", and on his supposed Priscillianism.

Baquiario has been defined as "Galician, optimistic and ignorant", in a description that seems to anticipate that of the mendicant monks and goliards of the High Middle Ages.

The type of itinerant monastic Christianity that he promotes is based on a theological conception of travel as peregrinatio pro Christo , different from the concept of fuga mundi that Saint Benedict would proclaim very soon afterwards.

Around the year 400 he wrote a letter to a deacon in which the word " monastery " was used for the first time in a Hispanic text.

In his Reparatione he described the capture of Rome by Alaric in the first person, so it is estimated that he was there on that date (410 AD)

The Libellus de fide, composed around 415, is a profession of faith in which he defends himself against accusations of Priscillianism. There are two recensions of this work, one published by Ludovico Antonio Muratori and another, with a much more carefully edited text, belonging to the monastery of Ripoll, which could be original, according to M. Cappuis, or a correction by Gennadius, according to A. Mundó. It expounds his doctrine on the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the Resurrection of the Body, the origin of the soul, the nature of man, the nature and origin of the devil, fasting, the canon of Scripture, and the use of the Apocryphal Gospels.

WORKS

- Epistula ad Ianuarium de reparatione lapsi, from around 410, where he writes to the monk Januarius about the readmission into the community of a brother who has seduced a nun

- Cena Cipriani, a humorous treatise, a critique of Julian the Apostate

- De reparatione lapsi and De fide.

- Priscilliani in Pauli Apostoli Epistulas Canones a Peregrino Episcopo emendati , prologue mentioned above. A large number of codices of this compilation are known because in the old Spanish Bibles they were included before the epistles of Saint Paul (before George Schepps discovered in 1885 that their author was the heretic Priscillian . Prior to that date they were attributed to Saint Jerome).

- G. Morín attributes to him two letters from the Sant Gall 190 manuscript, clearly influenced by Priscillianism.